AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

WEEKLY NEWS SERVICE

The A. F. of L. Weekly News Service gives a brief summary of important matters affecting labor, occurring in the industrial, legislative and judicial fields, and other information that will benefit the trade union movement.

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AGITATE! EDUCATE! ORGANIZE!

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LABOR OPENS ITS 1924 NON-PARTISAN CAMPAIGN; PRESENTS 12 DEMANDS

Washington, May 10.—With a declaration addressed to the American people entitled, "American Labor in the Campaign," the American Federation of Labor has fired its first big gun of its 1924 political battle.

The declaration contains 12 demands. It is issued by the executive committee of the A. F. of L., national non-partisan political campaign committee. This committee is composed of Samuel Gompers, president of the A. F. of L.; Frank Morrison, secretary of the A. F. of L., and James O'Connell, president of the metal trades department of the A. F. of L.

The partisan committee to organize the machinery for a vigorous campaign throughout the country in behalf of humanitarian principles and in favor of candidates who espouse these principles, which is labor's first indication of its 1924 platform demands:

"No special privilege is sought in any of the requirements set forth by labor. On the contrary, it is sought either to abolish some existing special privilege or to meet some condition brought into being by the constant development of new relationships and new methods in the world of industry, commerce and politics.

"The American labor movement asks no favors from the government. It asks nothing from the government which men and women can give themselves. It demands, above everything else, the opportunity for self-help. It prefers laws that establish relationships and contacts of industry to the devious, indirect and frequently deceptive methods of politics. Nevertheless, government exists for a purpose. Laws are necessary for the maintenance of civilization.

"But it is as important to have laws that encourage and permit as it is to have laws that discourage and prohibit. Too generally the thought of politicians is toward the making of laws that prohibit and restrain. This is largely because politicians and law makers are outside of the realm of productive achievement and either do not understand its requirements or serve some special group or interest that believes itself best served by special legislative favors.

"Those laws for which labor contends fall into certain classifications.

"First, laws to protect the helpless.

"Second, laws to abolish special privilege and to free industry for the working out of its purely industrial problems.

"Third, laws to make government more responsive to the needs of the people and to deprive courts of the power to rule as well as to adjudicate.

"We need less 'Thou shalt not' in our law.

"Public office is for public service, never for private gain or aggrandizement. The last vestige of the spirit of private gain must disappear from public life and labor pledges itself to the cause of purification until the battle is won forever.

The specific demands included in the declaration are:

Immigration—A policy of strict exclusion is imperative for many years to come.

Child labor—Support of the child labor amendment in the forthcoming election.

Adjusted compensation for ex-service men.

Affirmatively absolute recognition of labor's right to organize, to bargain collectively through a union and through representatives freely chosen, to work or to cease work collectively, and collectively to withhold or bestow patronage.

Demand for final and complete abolition of the power of courts to issue injunctions in labor disputes under circumstances where injunctions would lie if no labor disputes were in existence.

Repeal of the railroad labor board sections of the transportation act and the establishment of negotiation and co-operation between employes and railroad managements.

Repeal of anti-trust law which is now only used against labor.

Restricting power of United States supreme court through adoption of an amendment to the federal constitution which will permit congress, by a two-thirds vote, to pass any law set aside by the supreme court.

Aid for Agriculture—Labor will support every constructive measure offered by agriculture in the future as it has done in the past.

Taxation—Sharply graduated income and inheritance taxes favored. Sales tax declared a "deceptive device by which those least able to pay would be compelled to bear the heaviest proportionate burden."

Volstead act—Modification favored "so as to permit the manufacture and sale of 2.75 per cent wholesome beer."

International relations—"Labor holds that the United States should seek and cultivate every international relationship that will promote world peace. Labor favors 'the association of the free peoples of the world in a common covenant' and would approve our entrance into the present league of nations and the world court."

NEEDLE WORKERS' SWEAT SHOPS WIPED OUT THROUGH UNIONISM

New York, May 10.—In twenty-five years the International Ladies' Garment Workers' union has wrought mighty changes in the workers' lives, says Justice, official magazine of that union.

"Twenty-five years ago the cloak operator, finisher or presser, the waistmaker and the white goods worker were regarded as little more than social outcasts, as the lowliest of the lowly," says this labor publication.

"They worked like machines during the rush season, worked as long and as hard as they could stand the strain physically, often to a point of exhaustion at the sewing machines and pressing tables.

"And when there was no work in the shops, they could starve in silence, waiting meekly for the time when their work would again show up near the machines.

"The employers treated them like cattle. Their shops were not much better than stables, breeding places for disease. Besides that, the workers were compelled to bring their machines and tools and would carry them along whenever they changed jobs.

"Then the International appeared, things began to change slowly. The first practice was the abolition of the abominable practice of workers owning and migrating with their machines from shop to shop. Then came a little more light and cleanliness in the work rooms, and slowly the work hours began to be reduced. And when, some few years later, the International realized it had developed a substantial quantitie of fighting power, it started a conflict for recognition of the union and for a collective agreement with employers.

"This, however, was only a beginning. The work hours were still too long and the workers' earnings inadequate. The International decided to end the piece work system, and soon introduced week work in its place.

"As we compare the bleak conditions of those early days with conditions today, we must admit that, imperfect as they are, they are a complete as is our industry with evils and problems which our International is pressing for solution, the difference is marvelous.

"As compared with the semi-slaves of a score of years ago, our workers today are free men and women. They are no longer the plaything of the employer's whim. When aggrieved they now find recourse and protection in their organization.

"They are union men and women. They carry the union card, the modern industrial shibboleth which has converted them, like so many other workers, into self-reliant human beings, and has given them rights of which they never dreamed before."

CHILD LABOR BOSSES WOULD CONFUSE PUBLIC

Washington, May 10.—Unfair employers would create the belief that the child labor amendment is a federal constitution, just approved by the house, would prohibit all labor by children under 18 years.

Efforts to change the age limit to 16 years is part of this propaganda, and was condemned by Samuel Gompers, in a public statement. The A. F. of L. executive said many persons have been deceived as to the meaning of the language employed in the amendment.

"The amendment would be an enabling act permitting congress to limit, regulate or prohibit the labor of persons under 18 years of age," said President Gompers. "The age under which the labor of children would be prohibited by congress would be governed by the demands of the people. Between that age and 18 years congress would limit or regulate the labor of children according to the sentiment of the people.

"I can not but believe that President Nicholas Murray Butler of Columbia college is one of those who has been grievously deceived, or he would not have written such a letter as he did to Senators Shortridge and Wadsworth, for he says:

"'The nation that every boy and every girl should be kept in school or college until 18 years has nothing in commend it but sheer sentimentality.'

"Nothing is further from the facts, as has been noted," said President Gompers. "The people of the United States are determined that there shall be protection for the children. Any individual or political party that defeats the will of the people will be held responsible by the people."

PNEUMATIC HAMMER SHATTERS MEN'S NERVE

Kansas City, Mo., May 10.—A study of the effects of the pneumatic hammer in the boiler makers' trade is suggested by Editor Casey of the Boilermakers' and Iron Ship Builders' Journal.

Formerly two men operated this hammer, popularly known as "the gun." Now one man operates the machine, whose vibration shatters the workers' nerves. The size of rivets is increased as is the air pressure. In tank building the piecework system is often enforced, and the increased air pressure makes this work a sweating job, as the workers are speeded up.

Years ago the United States bureau of labor statistics studied the use of "the gun" in the boiler making industry. Stone cutters were unanimous that serious ailments and physical deterioration result in the use of the pneumatic hammer. Workers declare it shakes every part of a man's body.

WOULD SMASH UNIONS

Omaha, Neb., May 10.—The Bricklayers' union is the center of an attack by anti-unionists in this city. Contractors are being forced into the anti-union camp by threats of having their credit and building material curtailed. The anti-union element would establish individual bargaining among workers.

PLUMBERS RAISE WAGES

Asheville, N. C., May 10.—Employers have signed the new wage scale of Plumbers' union. Rates are $11 a day.

MACHINISTS RAISE WAGES

Peoria, Ill., May 10.—Organized machinists have raised wages 5 cents an hour. The new minimum is 95 cents.

WORKERS ARE JAILED BY CANNERY AGENTS

Seattle, May 10.—Cannery workers who were to be shipped from this city to Alaska on the Pacific Packing and Navigation company's steamer Admiral Watson, were arrested by Chinese contractor system. A score of Filipinos escaped from one of the Alaskan canneries. They were arrested for violating their contract. They were released through efforts of the Seamen's union. Under the law it is illegal to quit work in violation of a contract, though the federal laws and the United States supreme court have declared against this peonage. This state aid to the labor contractor has aroused protest and the case is prosecuting attorney who is compelled to enforce the serf edict.

Complaint to the state federation of labor declared the trade union movement will aid these victimized workers, all of whom are non-unionists.

Unbelievable conditions exist on these hell ships. The Filipinos told the police that they were allowed but one cup of water a day to wash in and one man of water with the dishes of half a hundred men. Cheap cotton socks were sold to the men for $1 a pair, and a cake of soap was sold for 25 cents. Filth and revolting conditions are everywhere, and disease contracted on these ships is quickly transferred to the salmon packing plants in Alaska.

Federal grand juries in Alaska have revealed the most shocking conditions under which the nation's salmon supply is packed. Unbelievable diseases, narcotics, unfit food, vermin-infested sleeping quarters and gun rule are the order, according to these reports. Recently the canners announced that labor conditions were improved and that the labor contractor would be eliminated. Developments in this city prove that the canners failed to maintain a decent semblance of the foul conditions they tolerate.

MOTHER MORTALITY HIGH IN CAPITAL

Washington, May 10.—More mothers die from childbirth in the nation's capital than in any other section of the United States, according to Miss Grace Abbott, chief of the United States children's bureau.

Census figures for 1922 show that the District of Columbia had a maternal mortality rate of 7.1. This means that 7.1 mothers thousand babies born alive in the District during that year seven mothers died from causes connected with childbirth.

Comparing American rates with those of 22 foreign countries, the children's bureau found a mother's chance to escape death from childbirth were better in every country, including Italy, Spain, South Africa, Spain and Hungary, than in Washington, D. C.

BAKERY WORKERS WIN

Washington, May 10.—Organized bakery workers have signed a one year agreement with the Bowman Biscuit company, which ends the lockout of union bakers. The agreement provides for a 48 hour week and increased wages.

ELECTRICAL WORKERS GAIN

Washington, May 10.—Detroit and Cleveland inside electrical workers' union have increases of 12½ cents an hour to President Noonan of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. The new Detroit rate is $1.25, and the Cleveland rate is $1.37½.

OIL PROFITS JUMP

New York, May 10.—Oil companies are reporting increased earnings this month over the same period last year. The Standard oil group leads with Standard oil of Indiana reporting more than $11,000,000 profit after all charges have been paid.

WORKERS' ILL HEALTH LESSENS PRODUCTION

New York, May 10.—Physicians and industrial hygiene authorities, in association with the state labor department, are arranging to study hygienic conditions in industry. Dr. W. Gilman Thompson is chairman of an organization formed for that purpose.

"Everywhere we see indications that both employers and workers are becoming keenly alive to the prevention of conditions of environment upon production," said Dr. Thompson. "There is an increasing variety of chemical substances used in the arts and manufactures which possess more or less toxic hazard for those who come in close contact with them. Moreover, recent scientific studies of general working conditions, such as fatigue, ventilation, and a local temperature, have emphasized the important economic relationship which these conditions bear to output in manufacture.

"Quite recently the state, through legislation, has indorsed the principle that the worker who is seriously incapacitated through the handling of poisonous substances, such as lead, for example, is just as worthy of compensation by his employer who has failed to protect him adequately, as if he had received some surgical accident through similar neglect to provide proper precautions against it.

"This principle has long been recognized in England and in other foreign countries, and its recent adoption by the state of New York has led to legislation declaring that 19 occupational diseases are compensable. There is a probability that others will be added to this list in the near future, as experience may justify."

STEEL PROFITS UP; ALL RECORDS BROKEN

New York, May 10.—In the first three months of this year the steel trust reports a net profit of more than $50,000,000. This is the largest profit of any three-month quarter in the trust's history. In March of this year profits totaled $19,065,475. This is the rate of more than $57,000,000 for the quarter. These profits are after the trust set aside $13,274,972 for depreciation.

This latest report is the clearest refutation of the judgment of those socialists who predicted disaster to this industry if the long work day were abandoned.

Instead, the steel trust is enjoying most prosperous times. The same condition exists in other steel corporations. The Bethlehem steel corporation disposed of $30,000,000 six per cent gold bonds last week without difficulty on the market. This company is the largest of the so-called independents and controlled by Jackenheimer, the Midvale and Cambria steel companies.

PARTISANSHIP HURTS DEMOCRACY'S CAUSE

Springfield, Mass., May 10.—Blind partisanship was branded as "the curse of democracy" by Governor Sweet of Colorado in an address to a conference of church men in this city.

"Corruption at Washington," he declared, "was caused by a blind acquiescence of men in the majority imposed by false leaders."

"A group of courageous, intrepid senators knew that they were false to allegiance to the majority in their own party made possible the exposure," he said. "Party unity is a pernicious cry when the government is being plundered by a corrupt majority.

"Party leaders, both Republican and Democratic, stand bound and dumb before the fetish of party regularity. We now have lowered Democratic and Republican and the same power and oil, the governor asserted.

"Again and again we have been told that individual initiative and freedom are fundamental to democracy," he said. "I agree, but democracy does not mean that the few shall prosper while the many perish; that initiative shall be stimulated in the lives of our leaders in legislation while the spirit is being crushed out of the soul of the workers.

"The fundamental cause of the failure of democracy today is the unjust, unworthy and wicked practices of organized wealth. Democracy will be able to serve as a democracy, not through material development, desirable as that is, but through the brotherhood expressed in the processes of our economic life."

EASTLAND VICTIMS LOSE DAMAGE SUIT

Chicago, May 10.—A jury has exonerated the city of Chicago from all blame in connection with the steamer Eastland disaster. The Eastland in the Chicago river July 25, 1915, when 812 lives were taken. Over 2,000 were in peril.

The city had been found negligent, damage suits aggregating possibly $10,000,000 would be filed.

The Eastland was built for the freight packet trade across Lake Michigan and was considered unworthy to fit her for the passenger service cabins were built on her upper decks. Thousands of men, largely organized workers employed on the river front called attention to the danger of the Eastland.

While tied to the dock and crowded with excursionists on that fateful July morning the vessel turned over amid indescribable scenes more than 800 men, women and children lost their lives.

Every attempt to collect damages from the vessel's owners has failed. In refusing the writ of error, that of six defendants in 1916, Federal Judge Sessions of Grand Rapids, Mich., ruled that the defendants could not be blamed as the Eastland was "considered" safe by owners, managers and navigators.

BOX BOARD INDUSTRY ADOPTS 8-HOUR DAY

Washington, May 10.—Announcement is made that representatives of the box board industry, at a conference here, have agreed to institute the eight-hour day and eliminate Sunday work.

The conference was called by Secretary of Labor Davis, who told these business men that legislation would outlaw the seven day week, if they did not act. The cabinet official read a letter from President Coolidge, which expressed the hope that "you may find a method to abolish the alternating week of 11-hour and 13-hour shifts."

In refusing to act, employers declare that in the long run it will be found more satisfactory to have the usual hours established by law, rather than the usual cessation of work on Sunday.

COAL ROADS PROSPER

New York, May 10.—The first quarter earnings of the hard coal roads show Delaware, Lackawanna & Western and Lehigh Valley railroads with the highest profits in their histories, except for the first quarter of 1922 when large quantities of coal were moved in anticipation of a coal strike.

LARGE UNION BENEFITS

Chicago, May 10.—In a period of slightly more than 44 years the International Cigarmakers' union has paid $19,091,177.51 in benefits.

BARBERS' STRIKE ENDS

Rochester, N. Y., May 10.—After a 15-minutes' strike more than 200 barbers and employers compromised a wage dispute.

Rail Managers and Their Agents Oppose Trade Union Recognition

Washington, May 10.—As panic stricken as an old woman who has lost control of her geese, the house administration party raved and stormed in a futile effort to keep the Howell-Barkley bill off the floor of the house and hold it in committee. By filibustering, a vote was postponed.

The bill would abolish the railroad labor board and set up machinery consisting of representatives of the nationally organized trade unions and the railroad managers to adjust grievances.

Some railroad managers are frenzied at the thought of meeting with "representatives of nationally-organized unions," and this frenzy is reflected in the house where certain congressmen act as though they have received definite instructions to fight the bill, regardless of cost.

No bill in this session of congress had created such a turmoil. Congressmen seem frightened at the thought of workers being treated as free men, and enjoying the privilege of collective bargaining.

Governor Sweet declared the election of good men is not enough. Their efforts are often made futile by corrupt business influences which will not permit honesty in government. Special privilege wants the vast government-owned resources of coal and oil, the lumber power and oil, the governor asserted.

"Again and again we have been told that individual initiative and freedom are fundamental to democracy," he said. "I agree, but democracy does not mean that the few shall prosper while the many perish; that initiative shall be stimulated in the lives of our leaders in legislation while the spirit is being crushed out of the soul of the workers.

"The fundamental cause of the failure of democracy today is the unjust, unworthy and wicked practices of organized wealth. Democracy will be able to serve as a democracy, not through material development, desirable as that is, but through the brotherhood expressed in the processes of our economic life."

SECRET TAX RETURNS REJECTED BY SENATE

Washington, May 10.—The administration received the hardest jolt since it came in power when the senate voted for full publicity of tax returns. The majority party attempted to placate a popular demand for this publicity by presenting a carefully drawn provision in the Mellon bill that would allow inspection of tax details only by authorized congressional committees. The senate voted down this plan and by a two-to-one vote declared for full publicity.

By practically the same vote the senate also defeated a provision to which will give public access to all claims for abatements or refunds of income taxes and to the subsequent decisions on such pleas.

Under the present law, nothing is more carefully guarded than income tax returns and refunds of taxes. The latter is increasing by leaps and bounds and now run into the millions of dollars on the word of treasury officials. The proceedings are considered a confidential matter between treasury officials and the tax claimant.

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INTEREST AND TAXES EAT FARM PRODUCTS

Washington, May 10.—Four-seventhes, or nearly one-half, of the total farm income of this country is taken to pay taxes and interest on mortgages and debts, according to a report made by the house committee on agriculture.

The committee favors the McNary-Haugen farm relief bill, designed to create a $200,000,000 government corporation that will buy and sell export surplus by the farmers whenever a special emergency is declared.

The committee drew a gloomy picture of the agricultural situation. It was stated that one-half as many banks failed between 1920 and 1922 as during the whole period from 1909 to 1923.

One-quarter of the farm owners in the country are annual bolts are bankrupt and more than 1,120,000 farmers and hired men deserted the farm in 1922 to seek industrial employment.

Above all, the report states, the purchasing value of farm products is less than half what it was before the war.

MANAGERS ARE SPLIT; UNION ACTORS SCORE

New York, May 10.—The Actors' Equity association split the theatrical managers and has reached an agreement with managers controlline 75 per cent of the local play houses. Lee Schubert and William A. Brady are the leading peace managers.

The "die-hards," led by Sam Harris, organized and have announced that they are issuing the press agent hokum about "art for art's sake." As the actors are thoroughly organized, and include practically every star in America, theatrical folk ask how long will the Harris group maintain their position.

HUGE COPPER PROFITS

New York, May 10.—The Anaconda copper company reports a net profit last year of $8,767,814, after interest, taxes, depreciation, and other charges were paid. These profits compare with $3,580,877 the previous year.

STATE UNIONS TO MEET

Fairbault, Minn., May 10.—Officers of the Minnesota state federation of labor have issued a call for the annual convention to be held in this city beginning Monday, July 21.

LEARN TO ARBITRATE BUSINESS MEN PLEAD

New York, May 10.—Business men in this city are urging arbitration as a substitute for law suits, as provided by a state law passed four years ago. In a full-page advertisement published by the local press the business men appeal to their associates to settle differences between themselves and to cease becoming involved in costly legal procedure.

"No need to tell you that the justice we are getting in the way of the speculation of our business controversies is deadly slow; that the courts are congested; that delay is very distasteful to us in money and wasted time and profound anxieties and other evils is almost prohibitive," the business men say. "You know all this. But all of you do not know that the remedy is easy and inexpensive.

"It has been in your own hands for four years—ever since the legislature of this state in 1920 enacted the arbitration law. Probably not 10 per cent of our business men know of this law, of the power it gives them, of the practical benefits it puts within their easy reach.

"The fact is that under this law business men can legally determine their controversies without delay, without the publicity of a court trial, at a trifling cost, in a simple proceeding free from legal technicalities, and before arbitrators selected by themselves."

It is stated that the volume of business before the arbitration tribunal is growing. The new arbitration law meets the requirements of justice in a vast majority of business controversies that hinge upon questions of fact.

"That is why the law was set up to the United States supreme court, uphold the policy of arbitration," the statement adds.

RALSTON IS HONORED

Washington, May 10.—Prior to his departure for California, Jackson H. Ralston, for years counsel for the American Federation of Labor, was tendered a dinner by more than 300 friends. President Gompers spoke for labor. Those present included representatives of every walk of life, many of whom have opposed Mr. Ralston's economic and political views, who now testified to his unselfishness and his ability.

He is considered an authority on questions involving human liberty, taxation and international law. He established the name in the latter field in the pious fund cases before The Hague tribunal and in the Venezuela claims.

His first case before the United States supreme court was a plea for the right of jury trial in a police court. Last week he probably made his last appearance before that court in pleading for a jury trial in contempt cases.

These two cases, involving the right of trial by jury, is indicative of his life's work.

DRESS MAKERS WIN

Chicago, May 10.—Striking dress makers secured a signed agreement with Hyman brothers. Other employers urged this concern to maintain its open shop attitude. The failure of this policy indicates that others will break. The workers' victory is significant because the allied employers' organizations, together with the state's attorney, the police and Judge Judge Sullivan, are aiding these employers. The strike is city wide and affects 3,000 workers.

PULLMAN WORKERS STRIKE

Chicago, May 10.—Profits of the Pullman company are breaking all records, but this corporation insists on its low wage system. It attempted to make three wage cuts in one month in one shop, and these employes suspended work. More than 250 joined the Brotherhood Railway Carmen.

Greedy Textile Employers Blamed; Dollar Grabbing Wrecks Industry

New York, May 10.—Depression in the New England textile industry can be traced to overcapitalization, mismanagement and faulty distribution, said President McMahon of the United Textile Workers, writing for an eastern newspaper.

When the war started, the trade interests state, many mills operated 24 hours a day and undreamed profits were made. Stockholders received quarterly dividends. Profits could be considered magnificent if issued annually before the war. As these profits increased, stock dividends were issued and mill values were often doubled and trebled by the stroke of a pen.

The Pacific print works, city of Lawrence, Mass., is cited as an illustration of this overcapitalization of from 1910 to 1920. It concern declared a 262 per cent dividend and increased its capitalization from $2,000,000 to $7,200,000. In 1912 the Pacific declared a 200 per cent stock dividend. The Arlington mills of Lawrence city declared a 131 per cent dividend; the Nashua manufacturing company, a 177 per cent dividend, and the Atlantic cotton mills, a 122 per cent dividend, all in the same period.

Many of these mills have the old land loans and hundreds of thousands of spindles of the old-fashioned size are in operation, said President McMahon. During the prosperous years no provision was made for replacements. Every dollar possible was taken out of the industry. The antiquated machinery in these mills is now expected to cope with up-to-date machinery in other localities, while the dollar-grabbing textile barons shriek that "southern competition is driving us out of business."

Stockholders be satisfied with a 10 per cent return, cease capitalizing these properties and equip the plants with modern machinery as the way to meet southern competition, said President McMahon.

The mismanagement of many New England mills has been notorious, if not criminal, and none are more responsible for this mismanagement than boards of directors. In too many places the agent or general manager has not the ability to hold such an important position, but secures same because of his social, fraternal or political standing.

The largest factor in the present depression is faulty distribution, said President McMahon.

"We have the wholesaler, the jobber, the commission merchant, the shipper and the expert, the banker, the municipal, state or national politician—all digging into the profit made on every pound of cotton manufactured.

"Yet, with all these barnacles on the good ship 'Textile,' we would safely land at harbor if it were not for the vast difference in price paid to the mill, by the wholesaler, jobber or commission man, and the price the consumer pays."

Another handicap to this industry, the trade unionist said, is gambling in futures, whether it be cotton, wool or silk.